

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1247

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S E C R E T PONTA DELGADA 0311

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDITIONAL TEXT)

E.O. 11652:XGDS-4

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: AZOREAN INDEPENDENCE

REF: STATE 194642, 20495, LISBON 4777, 4849

1. ON AUGUST 27 I SPOKE PRIVATELY WITH LUIS FRANCO, ONE OF MEMBERS OF FLA DIRECTING GROUP IN PONTA DELGADA. I EXPLAINED USG VIEWS OUTLINED IN REFTELS AND SAID WE HEAR SOME FLA LEADERS WERE SAYING US FAVORED IMMEDIATE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE WHICH WAS NOT TRUE. FRANCO REPLIED THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR FLA TO ACT NOW CONSIDERING USG POSITION AND THIS MADE HIS SAD BECAUSE HE BELIEVED PORTUGAL WOULD NOT SEND TROOPS IF AZORES DECLARED INDEPENDENCE NOW. FLA COULD ACCEPT MELOANTUNES GAINING POWER, EVEN THOUGHT HE IS CO-MODERATE, IF US AND WESTERN EUROPE SUPPORTED HIM. IN THAT EVENT, FRANCO PERSONALLY WOULD DISCUSS AZOREAN SITUATION WITH MELO ANTUNES, WHOM HE HAS KNOWN SINCE CHILDHOOD, AND IMPLIED THAT INDEPENDENCE COULD BE NEGOTIATED. FLA IS CONCERNED, HOWEVER, THAT WITHOUT USG AND OTHER SUPPORT MELO ANTUNES GOVERNMENT WOULD GO BANKRUPT AND BE REPLACED IN TWO MONTHS BY RIGHTIST ONE UNDER SPINOLA. THAT WOULD BE DISASTEROUS FOR AZORES WHICH WOULD BE SUBJECT TO FACIST EXPLOITATION AND POSSIBLE PUNISHMENT FOR INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT. HE ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT, IF CRISIS IS NOT RESOLVED IN NEAR FUTURE, CHOS AND ECONOMIC DISASTER ENGULFING CONTINENT WOULD REACH AZORES. IN ADDITION, HE SAID THAT MELO ANTUNES GROUP MAY NOT BE ABLE TO TAKE POWER AND NOTED

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RECENT GAINS BY LEFTISTS.

2. FRANCO SAID IF CIVIL WAR BROKE OUT ON CONTINENT, AZORES WOULD DETACH ITSELF FROM PORTUGAL. IN ADDITION, IF GROUP OF HOTHEADS GOT TOGETHER AND PROCLAIMED INDEPENDENCE, FLA WOULD DO LITTLE BUT GO ALONG. THIS, HE SAID, COULD HAPPEN ANY TIME BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE READY FOR INDEPENDENCE AND IMPATIENT AT BEING TOLD TO WAIT.

3. FRANCO SAID STORY THAT MELO ANTUNES AND CACASTRO HAD ARRIVED IN AZORES WAS UNTRUE, BUT THAT COULD HAPPEN IN FUTURE. IF LEFT WINS ON CONTINENT, COSTA GOMES COULD ALSO COME TO AZORES AND FORM PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT THERE. POSITION OF GENERAL MAGALHAES, ANTI-COMMUNIST AND ANTI-SEPARATIST, WOULD FACILITATE THIS. FRANCO CLAIMED ARMY OFFICERS HAVE SAID THEY WOULD CLOSE THEIR EYES TO ANTI-COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES, POLICY FRANCO ATTRIBUTED TO MAGALHAES. AZOREANS DO NOT FAVOR FORMATION OF MODERATE PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT IN AZORES AND IF IT WERE TO OCCUR WOULD ATTEMPT TO NEGOTIATE INDEPENDENCE THUS BECOMING HOST TO PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT IN EXILE.

4. FRANCO DESCRIBED FLA LEADERSHIP AS CONSISTING OF FIVE -MEMBER DIRECTING GROUPS LOCATED IN HORTA, ANGRA, PONTA DELGADA, LISBON, AND ONE OUTSIDE PORTUGAL. HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN RECENT MEETING OF FLA LEADERS IN PARIS WHICH HE HAD ATTENDED.

5. FRANCO ASKED IF FLA COULD EXPECT MESSAGES FROM USG IN FUTURE I SAID I THOUGHT IT UNLIKELY AND REITERATE USG POLICY OF STRICT NEUTRALITY. FRANCO MADE WHAT HE CALLED MORAL APPEAL THAT AZORES NOT BE USED AS FOOTBALL KICKED AROUND FOR STRATEGIC INTERESTS, BUT THAT DESIRES AND INTERESTS OF AZOREAN PEOPLE BE CONSIDERED. I PROMISED TO PASS ON ALL OF FLA CONCERNS.

6. ON AUGUST 26 I CONVEYED USG VIEWS OUTLINED IN REFTELS TO ANTONIO GOMEZ WHO PROMISED TO RELAY THEM TO FLA LEADERSHIP. PFEIFL E

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